

Q. What do we mean by the "right dispositions" for the reception of the Sacraments?

A. By the right dispositions for the reception of the Sacraments we mean the proper motives and the fulfillment of all the conditions required by God and the Church for the worthy reception of the Sacraments.

Q. Give an example of the "right dispositions" for Penance and for the Holy Eucharist.

A. The right dispositions for Penance are:

- (1) To confess all our mortal sins as we know them;
- (2) To be sorry for them, and
- (3) To have the determination never to commit them or others again.

The right dispositions for the Holy Eucharist are:

- (1) To know what the Holy Eucharist is;
- (2) To be in a state of grace, and
- (3) -- except in special cases of age or illness -- to be fasting for at least one hour.

Q. Can we receive the Sacraments more than once?

A. We can receive the Sacraments more than once, except Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders.

Q. Why can we not receive Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders more than once?

A. We cannot receive Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders more than once, because they imprint a character in the soul.

Q. What is the character which these Sacraments imprint in the soul?

A. The character which these Sacraments imprint in the soul is a spiritual mark which remains forever.

Q. Does this character remain in the soul even after death?

A. This character remains in the soul even after death; for the honor and glory of those who are saved; for the shame and punishment of those who are lost.

Q. Can the Sacraments be given conditionally?

A. The Sacraments can be given conditionally as often as we doubt whether they were properly given before, or whether they can be validly given now.

Q. What do we mean by giving a Sacrament conditionally?

A. By giving a Sacrament conditionally we mean that the person administering the Sacrament intends to give it only in case it has not been given already or in case the person has the right dispositions for receiving it, though the dispositions cannot be discovered.

Q. Give an example of how a Sacrament is given conditionally.

A. In giving Baptism, for instance, conditionally -- or what we call conditional Baptism -- the priest, instead of saying absolutely, as he does in ordinary Baptism: "I baptize you," etc., says: "If you are

not already baptized, or if you are capable of being baptized, I baptize you," etc., thus stating the sole condition on which he intends to administer the Sacrament.

Q. Which of the Sacraments are most frequently given conditionally?

A. The Sacraments most frequently given conditionally are Baptism, Penance and Anointing of the Sick; because in some cases it is difficult to ascertain whether these Sacraments have been given before or whether they have been validly given, or whether the person about to receive them has the right dispositions for them.

Q. Name some of the more common circumstances in which a priest is obliged to administer the Sacraments conditionally.

A. Some of the more common circumstances in which a priest is obliged to administer the Sacraments conditionally are:

- (1) When he receives converts into the Church and is not certain of their previous baptism, he must baptize them conditionally.
- (2) When he is called -- as in cases of accident or sudden illness -- and doubts whether the person be alive or dead, or whether he should be given the Sacraments, he must give absolution and administer the Anointing of the Sick conditionally.

Q. What is the use and effect of giving the Sacraments conditionally?

A. The use of giving the Sacraments conditionally is that there may be no irreverence to the Sacraments in giving them to persons incapable or unworthy of receiving them; and yet that no one who is capable or worthy may be deprived of them. The effect is to supply the Sacrament where it is needed or can be given, and to withhold it where it is not needed or cannot be given.

Q. What is the difference between the powers of a bishop and of a priest with regard to the administration of the Sacraments?

A. The difference between the powers of a bishop and of a priest with regard to the administration of the Sacraments is that a bishop can give all the Sacraments, while a priest cannot give Confirmation (without special permission) or Holy Orders.

Q. Can a person receive all the Sacraments?

A. A person cannot, as a rule, receive all the Sacraments; for a woman cannot receive Holy Orders, and a man who receives priesthood is forbidden to then receive the Sacrament of Matrimony.

The Evangelization Station

Hudson, Florida, USA

E-mail: evangelization@earthlink.net

www.evangelizationstation.com

Pamphlet 340

The Sacraments in General

Q. What is a Sacrament?

A. A Sacrament is an outward sign instituted by Christ to give grace.

Q. Are these three things, namely: An outward or visible sign, the institution of that sign by Christ, and the giving of grace through the use of that sign, always necessary for the existence of a Sacrament?

A. These three things are always necessary for the existence of a Sacrament, and if any of the three be wanting there can be no Sacrament.

Q. Why does the Church use numerous ceremonies or actions in applying the outward signs of the Sacraments?

A. The Church uses numerous ceremonies or actions in applying the outward signs of the Sacraments to increase our reverence and devotion for the Sacraments, and to explain their meaning and effects.

Q. How many Sacraments are there?

A. There are seven Sacraments:

Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Penance (Reconciliation), Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony.

Q. Were all the Sacraments instituted by Our Lord?

A. All the Sacraments were instituted by Our Lord, for God alone has power to attach the gift of grace to the use of an outward or visible sign. The Church, however, can institute the ceremonies to be used in administering or giving the Sacraments.

Q. How do we know there are seven Sacraments and no more or less?

A. We know there are seven Sacraments and no more or less because the Church always taught that truth. The number of the Sacraments is a matter of faith, and the Church cannot be mistaken in matters of faith.

Q. Why have the Sacraments been instituted?

A. The Sacraments have been instituted as a special means through which we are to receive the grace merited for us by Christ. As Christ is the giver of the grace, He has the right to determine the manner in which it shall be given, and one who refuses to make use of the Sacraments will not receive God's grace.

Q. Do the Sacraments recall in any way the means by which Our Lord merited the graces we receive through them?

A. The Sacraments recall in many ways the means by which Our Lord merited the graces we receive through them. Baptism recalls His profound humility; Confirmation His ceaseless prayer; Holy Eucharist His care of the needy; Penance His mortified life; Anointing of the Sick His model death; Holy Orders His

establishment of the priesthood, and Matrimony His close union with the Church.

Q. Give, for example, the outward sign in Baptism and Confirmation.

A. The outward sign in Baptism is the pouring of the water and the saying of the words of Baptism. The outward sign in Confirmation is the anointing with oil, the saying of the words of Confirmation and the placing of the bishop's hands over the person he confirms.

Q. What is the use of the outward signs in the Sacraments?

A. Without the outward signs in the Sacraments we could not know when or with what effect the grace of the Sacraments enters into our souls.

Q. Does the outward sign merely indicate that grace has been given, or does the use of the outward sign with the proper intention also give the grace of the Sacrament?

A. The outward sign is not used merely to indicate that grace has been given, for the use of the outward sign with the proper intention also gives the grace of the Sacrament. Hence the right application of the outward sign is always followed by the gift of internal grace if the Sacrament be administered with the right intention and received with the right dispositions.

Q. What do we mean by the "right intention" for the administration of the Sacraments?

A. By the right intention for the administration of the Sacraments we mean that whoever administers a Sacrament must have the intention of doing what Christ intended when He instituted the Sacrament and what the Church intends when it administers the Sacrament.

Q. Is there any likeness between the thing used in the outward sign and the grace given in each Sacrament?

A. There is a great likeness between the thing used in the outward sign and the grace given in each Sacrament; thus water is used for cleansing; Baptism cleanses the soul; Oil gives strength and light; Confirmation strengthens and enlightens the soul; Bread and wine nourish; the Holy Eucharist nourishes the soul.

Q. What do we mean by the "matter and form" of the Sacraments?

A. By the "matter" of the Sacraments we mean the visible things, such as water, oil, bread, wine, etc., used for the Sacraments. By the "form" we mean the words, such as "I baptize you," "I confirm you," etc., used in giving or administering the Sacraments.

Q. Do the needs of the soul resemble the needs of the body?

A. The needs of the soul do resemble the needs of the body; for the body must be born, strengthened, nourished, healed in affliction, helped at the hour of death, guided by authority, and given a place in which to dwell. The soul is brought into spiritual life by Baptism; it is strengthened by Confirmation; nourished by the Holy Eucharist; healed by Penance; helped at the hour of our death by Anointing of the Sick; guided by God's ministers through the Sacrament of Holy Orders, and it is given a body in which to dwell by the Sacrament of Matrimony.

Q. Whence have the Sacraments the power of giving grace?

A. The Sacraments have the power of giving grace from the merits of Jesus Christ.

Q. Does the effect of the Sacraments depend on the worthiness or unworthiness of the one who administers them?

A. The effect of the Sacraments does not depend on the worthiness or unworthiness of the one who administers them, but on the merits of Jesus Christ, who instituted them, and on the worthy dispositions of those who receive them.

Q. What grace do the Sacraments give?

A. Some of the Sacraments give sanctifying grace, and others increase it in our souls.

Q. When is a Sacrament said to give, and when is it said to increase, grace in our souls?

A. A Sacrament is said to give grace when there is no grace whatever in the soul, or in other words, when the soul is in mortal sin. A Sacrament is said to increase grace when there is already grace in the soul, to which more is added by the Sacrament received.

Q. Which are the Sacraments that give sanctifying grace?

A. The Sacraments that give sanctifying grace are Baptism and Penance; and they are called Sacraments of the dead.

Q. Why are Baptism and Penance called Sacraments of the dead?

A. Baptism and Penance are called Sacraments of the dead because they take away sin, which is the death of the soul, and give grace, which is its life.

Q. May not the Sacrament of Penance be received by one who is in a state of grace?

A. The Sacrament of Penance may be and very often is received by one who is in a state of grace, and when thus received it increases - as the Sacraments of the living do -- the grace already in the soul.

Q. Which are the Sacraments that increase sanctifying grace in our soul?

A. The Sacraments that increase sanctifying grace in our souls are:

Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony; and they are called Sacraments of the living.

Q. What do we mean by Sacraments of the dead and Sacraments of the living?

A. By the Sacraments of the dead we mean those Sacraments that may be lawfully received while the soul is in a state of mortal sin. By the Sacraments of the living we mean those Sacraments that can be lawfully received only while the soul is in a state of grace -- i.e., free from mortal sin. Living and dead do not refer here to the persons, but to the condition of the souls; for none of the Sacraments can be given to a dead person.

Q. Why are Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony called Sacraments of the living?

A. Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony are called Sacraments of the living because those who receive them worthily are already living the life of grace.

Q. What sin does he commit who receives the Sacraments of the living in mortal sin?

A. He who receives the Sacraments of the living in mortal sin commits a sacrilege, which is a great sin, because it is an abuse of a sacred thing.

Q. In what other ways besides the unworthy reception of the Sacraments may persons commit sacrilege?

A. Besides the unworthy reception of the Sacraments, persons may commit sacrilege by the abuse of a sacred person, place or thing; for example, by willfully wounding a person consecrated to God; by robbing or destroying a Church; by using the sacred vessels of the Altar for unlawful purposes, etc.

Q. Besides sanctifying grace do the Sacraments give any other grace?

A. Besides sanctifying grace the Sacraments give another grace, called sacramental grace.

Q. What is sacramental grace?

A. Sacramental grace is a special help, which God gives, to attain the end for which He instituted each Sacrament.

Q. Is the Sacramental grace independent of the sanctifying grace given in the Sacraments?

A. The Sacramental grace is not independent of the sanctifying grace given in the Sacraments; for it is the sanctifying grace that gives us a certain right to special helps -- called Sacramental grace -- in each Sacrament, as often as we have to fulfill the end of the Sacrament or are tempted against it.

Q. Give an example of how the Sacramental grace aids us, for instance, in Confirmation and Penance.

A. The end of Confirmation is to strengthen us in our faith. When we are tempted to deny our religion by word or deed, the Sacramental Grace of Confirmation is given to us and helps us to cling to our faith and firmly profess it. The end of Penance is to destroy actual sin. When we are tempted to sin, the Sacramental Grace of Penance is given to us and helps us to overcome the temptation and persevere in a state of grace. The sacramental grace in each of the other Sacraments is given in the same manner, and aids us in attaining the end for which each Sacrament was instituted and for which we receive it.

Q. Do the Sacraments always give grace?

A. The Sacraments always give grace, if we receive them with the right dispositions.